United Nations A/AC.183/PV.218

General Assembly

Official Records

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

218th Meeting
Wednesday, 29 November 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Cissé . . . . . (Senegal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Today the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is holding a solemn meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977.

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome His Excellency Mr. Freitas do Amaral, President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Salim Bin Mohammed Al-Khussaiby, President of the Security Council, His Excellency Mr. Chinmaya Gharekhan, Special Political Adviser to the Secretary-General and Representative to the Multilateral Peace Talks on the Middle East; His Excellency Mr. Herman Leonard de Silva, Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, and His Excellency Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization, representative of Palestine. I should also like to welcome representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations and liberation movements, and representatives of non-governmental organizations, members of the press and all those who have accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in this solemn meeting.

I now invite everyone present to rise and observe a minute of silence in memory of all those who have given their lives for the cause of the Palestinian people and the return of peace in the region.

The participants observed a minute of silence.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I should now like to make a statement on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

We have gathered here once again today, 29 November, to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. In 1977, the General Assembly, mindful of its responsibility towards the Palestinian people and the need to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, decided to observe this Day every year. Since then, the United Nations family of organizations has devoted itself fully to the task of supporting the Palestinian people in its endeavour. Meeting here again today, we are recommitting ourselves to the goal of attaining peace and justice in the Middle East.

Over the past few years in particular, it has been encouraging to note a number of encouraging breakthroughs in the Middle East peace process. These have led to the establishment of new realities on the ground, an improvement in the atmosphere of the negotiations and the gradual development of a sense of mutual confidence. At the end of the day, this could not but yield positive results. As representatives are all aware, after long and arduous negotiations, Israel and the Palestine Liberation

95-86839 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued in a corrigendum.

Organization signed, on 28 September last in Washington, D.C., an important document, the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which provides for an extension of responsibilities of the Palestinian Authority to parts of the West Bank and for elections in the near future.

The road to this further agreement towards implementation of the Declaration of Principles was hard, and the price that the parties had to pay for bringing their negotiations to fruition was high. Their progress was marred by acts of violence by forces opposed to peace, including the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin earlier this month. And yet the parties demonstrated their dedication to moving on steadily in pursuit of new areas of agreement, mutual reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People welcomed this new agreement, as it had welcomed earlier progress, and reiterated its full and unequivocal support for the ongoing peace process, particularly at its present crucial stage, and its hope that the process would continue to advance until a just and lasting settlement was achieved.

Peace and stability can hardly take hold where widespread misery, poverty and dispossession persist. For the Palestinian people, peace is not an abstract concept. In order to be credible, peace must lead to an improvement of their everyday life and to a better future for their children. For many years, the Committee has called on the international community to support and assist the Palestinian people suffering from the hardships of occupation and living in extremely difficult circumstances. Today, the Palestinian Authority is making great efforts, assisted by the donor community and the United Nations, to establish an effective administration and to improve the quality of life. However, the legacy of 28 years of occupation and the destruction of much of the infrastructure requires a large-scale, long-term effort by the international community to tackle this problem.

Back in 1991, the Madrid Conference launched this effort by starting not only the bilateral peace process but also multilateral negotiations on Middle East regional issues. The conference created a much-needed framework for the promotion of region-wide economic cooperation and development. Much has been done to date by the donor community. Our Committee has welcomed the convening at Casablanca in October 1994 of the Middle East-North Africa Economic Summit, and has welcomed the most recent follow-up summit, held at Amman from 29 to 31 October of this year. The Committee was gratified to note that the participants at the Amman summit declared their intention to implement as soon as possible the understandings reached at the meeting.

For its part, the United Nations has continued to be a principal contributor to the programmes of rehabilitation and socio-economic development of the Palestinian society. As it has for many years, the Organization remained committed to and fully engaged in the various forms of assistance to the Palestinian people. In the course of the past year, the important work of establishing a United Nations coordination mechanism in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and of formulating an integrated United Nations approach to specific areas of assistance has been carried out by the office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories. The Committee is grateful to the Secretary-General for devoting much time and effort to the pressing task of improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people and helping them to rehabilitate and develop their national economy and integrate it into a wider regional economic context. In its programme of work for 1995, the Committee gave priority to promoting international assistance to the Palestinian people in order to enable them to meet their socio-economic and development needs, and to supporting the Palestinian Authority in its institution-building efforts. It also structured its programme of regional meetings so as to address these issues in a more focused and practical manner.

Last year, the General Assembly, in its resolution 49/62 A, reaffirmed that the United Nations had a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until the question was resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy. Our Committee, as the organ of the General Assembly dealing with the question of Palestine, will continue to make every effort to promote the effective implementation of the agreements that have been reached between the parties. It will work towards the attainment of a solution of the question of Palestine based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as towards the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular the right to self-determination. In this context, the Committee will continue to monitor developments on the ground and to alert the international community to human rights violations by the occupying forces and to the need to resolve outstanding issues such as the status of Jerusalem, settlements and refugees in accordance with established international principles and United Nations resolutions.

On this solemn occasion, I would like to state on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People that, in keeping with the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly, our Committee will continue to stand by the Palestinian people and to work untiringly towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

I now have the pleasure of calling upon the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral.

Mr. Freitas do Amaral (Portugal), President of the General Assembly: May I first of all express to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People my appreciation for having been invited to take part in this important observance.

Recognizing the need to strengthen and consolidate international support for the Palestinian people, the General Assembly, by its resolution 32/40 B, requested the annual observance of 29 November, the anniversary of the adoption of resolution 181 (II), which partitioned Palestine, as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The designation of this special day reaffirmed the General Assembly's conviction that the attainment of political, economic and social justice by the Palestinian people was essential to the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

As we meet on this occasion, we are pleased to note the progress that has been made in the peace process on the question of Palestine, despite delays and acts of violence that include the most tragic assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, whose life was stolen because he was deeply committed to the same peace process we commend today. We underline in particular the signing by the parties on 28 September 1995 of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, providing for further withdrawals of Israeli forces, for the extension of responsibilities of the Palestinian Authority to parts of the West Bank, and for Palestinian elections.

We have been greatly encouraged by the fact that Israel has begun its withdrawal in a timely manner, that a number of prisoners have been released and that the elections are now scheduled to take place in late January. These developments augur well for a solution to this longstanding conflict. Both parties are therefore to be commended for their courageous progress towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and the establishment of peaceful relations between their peoples.

In welcoming this positive evolution, we urge the parties to continue to display the necessary political will and good faith to bring the peace process to full fruition. It would be tragic if a resurgence of violence were to jeopardize the peace process now under way.

The United Nations should continue to play a role in mobilizing the needed assistance in order to establish solid foundations for peace and in promoting the dialogue and confidence-building measures necessary to dissipate the hostility and mistrust that continue to alienate the peoples of the region. It should also continue to promote, in the interest of world peace and security, the peace process between all the parties to the conflict.

This Committee, under your dedicated leadership, Sir, has done much to focus the world's attention on the fundamental aspects of the question of Palestine. It must be particularly satisfying for you to see that progress has been made towards realizing the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Your task, however, is far from finished. A number of issues that are basic to the conflict and of great concern to many Member States remain to be negotiated, and the Palestinian people need the support and solidarity of the international community in enabling them to establish an effective administration. I know your Committee is keen to continue to make a concrete contribution to international endeavours in support of the peace process and I wish it success in its future activities.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): As the Committee is aware, the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, is now travelling in Africa. Therefore, I have the honour to call on Mr. Chinmaya Gharekhan, Special Political Adviser to the Secretary-General and Representative to the Multilateral Peace Talks on the Middle East.

Mr. Gharekhan: As has just been announced, the Secretary-General is away on an official tour. He very much regrets that he is not able to be here this morning to observe this year's International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. He has asked me to convey the following message on his behalf:

> "The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People symbolizes the ongoing responsibility of the United Nations towards the Palestinian people and its commitment to the

promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. I attach great importance to the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the region and will continue to do my utmost towards this end.

"In the past two years, historic developments have taken place in connection with the question of Palestine, following the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993 by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"During the past year, while there have been setbacks, the Middle East peace process has continued and made progress. Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization have demonstrated their commitment to the principles and provisions of the agreements signed by them and have shown their determination to proceed in the implementation of the agreements they have reached. They have also agreed that the immediate and long-term political differences between them should be resolved through negotiations and have persevered in their efforts towards this end. I am encouraged by the fact that the Israeli and Palestinian leaders have maintained their commitment to the peace process despite the tragic assassination of one of its main architects, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"I welcomed the signing on 28 September 1995 in Washington, D.C., of the Agreement between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and applauded the leaders of Israel and the PLO and their negotiating teams, whose resolve and dedication to peace helped to reach this Agreement, which represents a further important step towards the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles.

"I hope that this achievement will encourage progress in the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks of the Middle East peace process, leading to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

"The security situation remains a cause of concern, a concern which has intensified in the aftermath of Prime Minister Rabin's death. Over the past year, I have on several occasions expressed outrage over acts of violence whose aim was to derail the peace process. Extremists on both sides must be stopped. The most effective way to curb their influence is to ensure that the negotiations continue and that tangible benefits deriving from the agreements thus far reached are apparent to all.

"Of fundamental importance is the need to eradicate the economic instability and poor living conditions, especially in the Gaza Strip, that could endanger support for the peace process. The resources of the United Nations family of organizations are contributing to economic and social development — a prerequisite for an effective transition towards Palestinian self-rule, which can help build the foundations for a lasting peace.

"Since his appointment in June 1994, the United Nations Special Coordinator in the occupied territories, Mr. Terje Larsen, has guided and supported the ongoing activities of the United Nations programmes and agencies. These include facilitating the development of public-works projects to create immediate employment opportunities and bring visible changes to the Gaza Strip; establishing a coordination mechanism on the ground to ensure effective disbursement of donor funds; and coordinating training and other assistance for the Palestinian police. The committed efforts of the international community are gradually beginning to bear fruit and a number of improvements in the situation have taken place, in particular with regard to institution-building and the development of infrastructure.

"I renew once again the firm commitment of the United Nations in support of the peace process. The involvement of the Organization has so far been mainly in the field of economic and social development. The programmes and agencies of the United Nations system will continue to provide all possible expertise and assistance in these areas.

"In conclusion, I should like to extend my thanks to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, under your leadership, Sir, for its contribution and efforts towards the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people."

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I should like to ask Mr. Gharekhan to be kind enough to convey to the Secretary-General the Committee's thanks for his inspiring statement and his efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, and for his support for the Committee's work.

I now have the pleasure of calling on Mr. Salim Bin Mohammed Al-Khussaiby, President of the Security Council.

Mr. Al-Khussaiby (Oman), President of the Security Council: Allow me at the outset to express my pleasure in participating, in my capacity as President of the Security Council, in this special meeting marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to join in this important observance, held annually to commemorate this Day.

The international community is committed to working hard towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. This event is also a reflection of the determination of our Organization to bring long-awaited peace to this region.

As President of the Security Council, I follow the events in the peace process with profound interest. There is no doubt that this year will be remembered as the year of major breakthroughs in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations set off by the 1991 Madrid Conference and the signing of the Declaration of Principles. We were encouraged by the fact that, in September last, in spite of numerous bilateral problems, the peace process advanced considerably and culminated in the signing at Washington, D.C., of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Regrettably, the road to peace has been hard and often tragic. Acts of extreme violence committed by those opposing the new realities in the region have claimed many lives. Most recently, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's Prime Minister, became another victim for having tried to achieve peace with his neighbours. These tragic setbacks notwithstanding, Israelis and Palestinians alike have demonstrated outstanding resilience, considerable political courage, wisdom and dedication to the letter and spirit of the Declaration of Principles, as well as an understanding of the urgent need to implement the agreements reached so far. We commend the Palestinian people and the Israelis for their efforts and determination. Our congratulations also go to those who have contributed to facilitating this difficult and unprecedented process.

As members of the Committee know, the Security Council's association with efforts to help the parties to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East goes back many years. In that regard, it is especially gratifying to remind ourselves that the present Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Today, the Palestinians and the Israelis are transiting through a very delicate and crucial stage in their relationship, fraught with many dangers. It is therefore of paramount importance that the international community continue to contribute constructively to the peace process and to assist the parties in accomplishing their mission. Guided by its responsibilities under the Charter, the Security Council will continue to support the efforts of the parties to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in the interest and for the benefit of all parties concerned, including the Palestinian people.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I now have the pleasure of calling on Mr. Al-Kidwa, the Permanent Observer of Palestine, to read out a message from His Excellency President Yasser Arafat.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is my honour to read out the message from Mr. Yasser Arafat which he has addressed to this meeting.

"I am pleased on this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to extend to you, Sir, to all the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and to all those who believe in the unity of Palestine, our most profound and sincere thanks for their efforts to restore to the Palestinian people the exercise of its inalienable and national rights, as endorsed by international resolutions and legality.

"We extend our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his untiring efforts to enhance the strategic opportunities of our people and to support a comprehensive and just peace and the achievement of a historic reconciliation in the region based on mutual respect, recognition of rights and the achievement of self-determination and peaceful coexistence, which will put a decisive end to all wars, occupation, violence and terrorism.

"I am also pleased on this occasion to extend my thanks and appreciation to all those who believe in the justice of my people's cause and who commemorate this Day, thereby expressing their support for our rights in solidarity with our people and for our just struggle, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly marking the annual observance of

this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

"This solidarity has supported and continues to support the struggle of our people and its continued progress, which has been crowned by the achievement of important national objectives on our path towards independence and the exercise of our national sovereignty in our homeland with the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with its capital at Al-Quds al-Sharif.

"As all Committee members know, the Palestinian people has established its national Authority on a part of its national territory. The first stage was initiated with the signing of the Declaration of Principles in Washington, D.C., two years ago. We are now beginning a new phase: the implementation of the Interim Agreement on expanding the areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority. We are also restoring other Palestinian rights, thus completing the implementation of the Interim Agreement.

"We must now move to the final-status negotiations if the peace process is to achieve its full significance. This culmination would result in a great and historic reconciliation throughout the region. But such an achievement requires real progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks, with a view to securing full Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab Palestinian territories in accordance with international resolutions and law. Only in this way can all the peoples of the region live in freedom, justice, equality, security and stability; only thus can we establish a new free, prosperous and stable Middle East as a pillar of international peace and security.

"There must be continued and determined efforts to achieve a just political settlement of our cause if a modern nation is to be built and democratic Palestinian political rule established, thereby allowing for reconstruction and development following many years of bitter occupation.

"At this crucial stage in the life of our peoples, in respect of both a comprehensive and just political solution and of nation-building, we look forward to continued solidarity. We are waging a war for reconstruction and development. This is our first experience of establishing democratic political rule and holding elections. These elections will indeed be the first of their kind in our country and they must be held as soon as possible. Here, solidarity is one of the pillars of our achievements and of the process of strengthening international peace.

"Today, our region remains the focus of the attention of the world — a world that is hopeful that peace will be achieved and that an end will be put to hatred and suspicion. We are driven by the desire to strengthen peace and achieve our hopes and aspiration. Violence, terrorism and assassination, which we condemn, must therefore be eradicated. The peace process must be protected against anything that might jeopardize it, such as the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin of Israel or the decision of the United States Congress to transfer the American embassy to Jerusalem. That decision set a serious precedent that threatens to undermine the peace process, since it runs counter to the position of the current United States Administration, for which we are grateful, and of all previous Administrations. It also runs counter to the Declaration of Principles, which provides for negotiations on Jerusalem and other final-phase issues. In addition, it contravenes international law and resolutions prohibiting the annexation of Jerusalem on the basis that the city is part and parcel of the occupied Palestinian territories.

"The power of international solidarity can be enormous if all countries and peoples unite in determination to achieve peace and justice. The widespread international solidarity with our people has profound importance and is deeply cherished by the Palestinians, whose struggle it enhances. To all our friends and brothers who are commemorating this Day, we extend our deepest and most sincere thanks and appreciation. We wish them every success in building and preserving the edifice of international peace."

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I would ask Mr. Al-Kidwa to convey the Committee's sincere thanks to President Arafat for his important message. I should like to assure President Arafat and, through him, the entire Palestinian people, of the Committee's unwavering determination to continue and intensify its efforts under its mandate to contribute to the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine that will enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable national rights as soon as possible.

On behalf of the Committee, I should like once again to thank His Excellency the President of the General

Assembly, the Representative of the Secretary-General, His Excellency the President of the Security Council and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements and for having participated in the first part of our meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 11.05 a.m. and resumed at 11.10 a.m.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I have the pleasure of calling on Mr. Herman Leonard de Silva, Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

Mr. de Silva (Sri Lanka), Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories: On behalf of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the occupied Territories, and on my own behalf, I have the honour to convey this message on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in Washington in 1993 and of the Israeli-Palestine Liberation Organization Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area in Cairo in 1994 were historic landmarks of the peace process in the Middle East. Its second stage commenced with the signing of the Oslo II Agreement in Washington on 28 September 1995. Since then, significant progress has been made in the implementation of the peace agreements with the Israeli military withdrawal from the West Bank town of Jenin. However, in spite of these important positive developments, the peace process has been rendered more vulnerable by the tragic assassination on 4 November 1995 of one of its principal architects, the late Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin. It is imperative that, despite this sad and deplorable event, all parties involved maintain the momentum generated by these agreements in order to ensure the smooth continuation of the peace process.

Despite the positive developments mentioned, it is a matter for regret that the Government of Israel has continued to withhold its cooperation from the Special Committee. It has persistently denied the Special Committee access to the occupied territories covered by its mandate, a situation which has not changed since the Committee's creation in 1968. We hope that, in the light of the changed environment of peace, there will be a change of attitude in this regard. Not only will it be an earnest of good faith on the part of the Government of Israel, but the Special Committee will also be enabled to accomplish its task more efficiently and with greater assurance.

The signing of the Oslo and Cairo Agreements gave rise to very high expectations concerning the improvement of the human rights situation in the occupied territories. It was expected that these agreements would usher in a new era with the establishment of peace, justice, understanding and respect for human rights in the region. The Special Committee gave its anxious consideration to the question of whether the positive political developments to which reference has been made have led to a significant improvement in the human rights situation of Palestinians and other Arabs of the occupied territories. The Committee has concluded that violations of human rights in the territories remain very serious and a matter of grave concern.

Among the principal factors contributing to the lack of improvement in the human rights situation are the repeated closures that were imposed on the occupied territories after serious incidents which affected security. The nature and effect of these closures are such that they amount to collective punishment. They have been described as an economic blockade and have caused a significant deterioration of the economic and social situation in the occupied territories, especially in the Gaza Strip. They have also led to a significant reduction in the number of Palestinians allowed to work in Israel. In addition, the restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement of the population of the occupied territories have had adverse consequences in the fields of health, education and the freedom of worship.

An important source of tension in the occupied territories has been the relentless expropriation of Arab-owned land for the expansion of settlements, the building of bypass roads and the appropriation of areas as quarries and natural reserves. The situation in regard to new settlements is particularly serious in East Jerusalem. The expansion of settlements around Jerusalem was said to be part of a policy aimed at altering the city's demographic composition by reducing the number of Arabs who live there. The Special Committee noted with concern the archaeological excavations in Jerusalem, which endanger the Al-Aqsa Mosque. In addition, the severe restrictions imposed on persons authorized to enter the city have seriously jeopardized freedom of worship for both Muslims and Christians.

Another significant source of tension among the population of the occupied territories has been the persistently violent behaviour of settlers, especially in the city of Hebron. Their conduct has become more aggressive and they have repeatedly attacked Palestinians, including the elderly and children, and vandalized their property, in most cases with complete impunity. Settlers have recently begun to clash violently with Israeli soldiers when staking claims to Palestinian-owned land by establishing encampments on hilltops in the vicinity of their settlements.

The number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention facilities continues to remain high. Their release has fallen behind schedule, which jeopardizes the smooth running of the peace process. Conditions of detention are reported to have deteriorated since the signing of the Oslo and Cairo Agreements. Of particular concern to the Special Committee are the "exceptional dispensations", which amount to licences to commit aggravated forms of torture, accorded to the General Security Service regarding the interrogation of persons suspected of having committed security offences. These harsh methods of interrogation even resulted in the death of a Palestinian detainee in April 1995.

The Special Committee welcomes the transfer in September of additional responsibilities to the Palestinians in the fields of statistics, fuel and gas, insurance, commerce and industry, labour and local government. It also welcomes the allocation of additional water resources to the inhabitants of the occupied territories. These constitute yet another step in the process of restitution of all the occupied territories and ought to bring about an improvement in the daily lives of their inhabitants.

The land and water resources of the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan have reportedly continued to be confiscated and its expression of nationalist sentiments has been prohibited and punished. The Special Committee nevertheless hopes that tangible progress will be made in the negotiations concerning the occupied Syrian Arab Golan.

The Special Committee is of the view that much greater effort has to be made if the human rights of all the inhabitants of the occupied territories and the region are to be more fully enjoyed in real terms. The political will is there, but unless the momentum of the peace process is maintained, there is the constant danger that not giving attention to the justified aspirations of the population of the occupied territories will bring with it the spectre of eroding support for the peace process, which can give way to frustration and despair. The progress in the peace process has to go hand in hand with full compliance with all relevant United Nations resolutions and the universally accepted standards of human rights. The Special Committee hopes that its findings will be taken into account when the concrete measures that need to be taken to that end are determined and that its work will be seen as a positive contribution to the peace process. All parties concerned must endeavour to build a truly meaningful culture of respect for human rights in the occupied territories so that the recent significant achievements may enable the people of the region to live in dignity, peace, security and mutual respect. This is the only way to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

The Chairman *(interpretation from French)*: I thank His Excellency Mr. Herman Leonard de Silva for his important statement. It is now my pleasure to call on His Excellency Mr. Julio Londoño Paredes, the Permanent Representative of Colombia, who will read a message from His Excellency the President of Colombia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Eleventh Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Londoño Paredes (Colombia) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: It is my honour to address the Committee in my capacity as the representative of the Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an occasion of singular importance for the Non-Aligned Movement. The cause of Palestine has been, is and will continue to be one of our primary goals and concerns. We are convinced that, until the serious difficulties and anguish of the Palestinians are resolved once and for all, it will be impossible to achieve the much-desired peace in the Middle East.

We greet with optimism the achievement of recent agreements between Palestine and Israel and it is our hope that the process will continue to move towards a just and permanent peace, that takes duly into account the interests of the Palestinians and all parties to the process now taking place in the Middle East.

The Non-Aligned Movement will maintain its support and endorsement of the courageous efforts being made in spite of those who opt for threats and violence to prevent the achievement of peace, the establishment of an independent and sovereign State for Palestinians in their own national territory and a resolution of the problem of the refugees in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

The Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, meeting during the third week of October in the Colombian city of Cartagena de Indias, in their deliberations paid special attention to the question of Palestine. Therefore, I would now like to read out portions of the Final Document of that Conference.

"[The Heads of State and Government] reaffirmed their unflinching support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to secure their inalienable rights to self-determination and independence and reiterated their demand for the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Palestinian and other Arab lands including Jerusalem.

"They pointed out that the responsibility of the United Nations in this matter should continue until the Palestinian people exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, until an independent and sovereign State is established within its national territory, and until the problem of refugees is settled in conformity with ... the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. They therefore insisted on the need for the General Assembly to reaffirm, at its fiftieth regular session, its position on the major aspects of a definitive peace settlement, including the status of Jerusalem, the illegal settlements and refugees. They regretted the decision by Israel to confiscate Palestinian land and property in Jerusalem as well as its attempts to alter the religious and historic character of the Holy City. In this respect, they reaffirmed all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions related to Jerusalem and considered the Israeli actions contrary to these resolutions as null and void. ... They called for full and scrupulous implementation of the Agreements, and in particular the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 465 and 478. They underlined the need for the mechanism dealing with the issue of Palestine set up by the General Assembly to continue operating in an effective way. They expressed their support to the call made by the Jerusalem Committee, held in Ifrane, Morocco, 16-17 January 1995, to the United Nations Security Council, in particular the two co-sponsors of the Peace Conference to take the necessary measures to compel Israel to desist from carrying out any settlements and judaization of the Holy City of Jerusalem and any geographic or demographic changes therein, and to comply with the agreements and conventions providing for the preservation of the Palestinian institutions and the Islamic and Christian holy sites in the Holy City of Jerusalem in implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

"They expressed that the Declaration of Principles signed in Washington on 13 September 1993, the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 20 September 1995 and the establishment of the Palestinian Self-Government Authority constitutes a new step in efforts taken by Palestine and Israel.

"They considered that the arrangements relating to a Palestinian interim self-government should be widened quickly so that the Declaration of Principles is applied as rapidly as possible to the totality of occupied territories, with a view to giving effect to the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of a Palestinian State.

"In this context, they welcomed the conclusion of the Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip concluded in Taba, Egypt and signed in Washington by President Arafat and the Israeli Prime Minister as an important step towards the fulfilment of the national rights of the Palestinian people. They expressed the hope that further vigorous steps shall be taken for the complete Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967 in order that comprehensive peace and common prosperity should prevail on the area." *(A/50/752, paras. 131-135)*

I should like to express our appreciation for the very important contribution made by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the cause of the self-determination of Palestine.

We strongly support the Committee.

The Chairman *(interpretation from French)*: I thank Mr. Julio Londoño Paredes and request him to convey to His Excellency the President of Colombia the sincere thanks of the Committee for his very important message.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my gratitude to the Government of Colombia for having been kind enough to receive me as a guest at the Eleventh Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, where I had the honour to represent the Committee.

I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Snoussi, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco who will read a message from His Excellency Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco, in his capacity as Chairman of the Twenty-second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.

Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): The message is as follows:

"Faithful to its laudable tradition, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is today commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People which this year coincides with the beginning of true détente in the history of the Middle East region.

"On this occasion, it is a pleasure for me, as Chairman of the Twenty-second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), to convey to the Committee and its Chairman, Ambassador Cissé, our congratulations and esteem for the efforts made to defend the rights of the fraternal Palestinian people with a view to enabling them to attain their freedom, national independence and territorial sovereignty and to disseminate the principles of law, justice and equity.

"I should also like to convey my thanks and gratitude to all the staff of the United Nations Division for Palestinian Rights for their noble and untiring work to promote the law and to support the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. I should also like to take this opportunity to appeal to the international community to continue to afford the support necessary to the Palestinian national Authority to help it to overcome the difficulties it faces in laying the groundwork for an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital, a State with modern foundations that will emerge within the framework of the new relationship resulting from the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the peace negotiations in the region.

"As the Committee knows, the creation 25 years ago of the Organization of the Islamic Conference was made possible through the initiative of His Majesty King Hassan II when he convened the First Islamic Summit Conference in Morocco, following the arson attack on the blessed Al-Aqsa mosque, which for us embodies the profound feelings of the Islamic nation as one of the greatest symbols of Islam and one of the most important monuments to an historic stage of Islam.

"It should come as no surprise that the Islamic nation is committed to defending its holy places and that the question of Palestine is a top priority for the OIC. As the most important cause of the Islamic nation, this priority is high on the list of objectives of the Charter of the OIC and a permanent item on its agenda at sessions and meetings at the level of summit conferences and at other gatherings.

"Member countries of the Organization have thus defended and continue to defend the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their struggle for freedom and emancipation on the basis of international law and United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. They have spared no effort to safeguard the holy places of Islam and to protect them in cooperation with concerned international and regional organizations.

"Today, as the question of Palestine is at a historic crossroads on the path towards a just and lasting peaceful settlement, we welcome these positive developments and will strive to work together to establish a peace that guarantees, on the one hand, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and the creation of an independent State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital and, on the other, security for all parties concerned.

"The advent of the peace we look forward to in the region requires the solidarity of the members of the international community to settle all differences, *inter alia*, the problem of the city of Al-Quds al-Sharif, compliance with the timetable for the transfer of powers to the Palestinian national Authority, progress in the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations and, more specifically, the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli negotiations.

"The path of peace is an irreversible choice. However, it is threatened by the dangers of extremism, violence and terrorism. Furthermore, financial resources are needed to build the Palestinian economy and all economies in the Arab region because the establishment of peace is an essential factor in defusing a major hotbed of tension that has been a cause for concern to the entire world for almost half a century. In addition, the extension of

this peace will provide stability and help to eliminate all forms of violence and extremism.

"Because of the interest it has in these questions, the Seventh Islamic Summit Conference, which was chaired by His Majesty King Hassan II on 13, 14 and 15 of December 1994, expressed its support and endorsement of the Middle East peace process, which seeks to promote a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. It also welcomed the agreements concluded in this framework.

"Therefore, today more than ever before, there is an urgent need for this honourable Committee to continue to be faithful to the lofty goals for which it was created: to support the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, which was the basis of the peace process in the region before and after the Madrid Conference as well as of the Declaration of Principles signed in Washington on 13 September 1993 and subsequent agreements.

"It is therefore a positive sign that the attainment of these goals is mobilizing all peace-loving countries. This, I have no doubt, will usher in a new era, a prosperous future and a dignified and better life for the peoples of this region and the world."

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I would request Ambassador Snoussi to be kind enough to convey to the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco the sincere thanks of the Committee for his important message. This message reflects the great importance that the Organization of the Islamic Conference has always attached to the Palestinian question and reflects the efforts of the Kingdom of Morocco to seek peace in the Middle East and in Palestine in particular.

I now call on Mr. Said Kamal, Under-Secretary-General for Palestine Affairs in the League of Arab States, who will read a message from His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Esmat Abdul-Maguid, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Kamal (League of Arab States) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is my great pleasure to read out the communiqué from Mr. Abdul-Maguid, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, which is as follows:

"Allow me first and foremost, on behalf of the Secretariat of the League of Arab States and on my own behalf, to express to you, Mr. Chairman, our great appreciation for the role played by the Committee that you preside over and over which your country has presided since its creation pursuant to resolution 3376 (XXX) adopted on 10 November 1975. Through this role, the Committee has helped to draw the priority attention of the United Nations to the Palestinian cause and has assisted the Organization in defending the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to build a national entity on their own territory.

"The world's conscience has been stung by this problem and international support has grown for the struggle of the Palestinian people. It is no longer possible to envisage a solution to the problem that does not take the aspirations and hopes of the Palestinian people into account.

"This meeting today has special significance. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was established by General Assembly resolution 32/40 B in 1977. That resolution affirms, on behalf of the international community, that the struggle of the Palestinian people is just. A great injustice was recognized by General Assembly resolution 36/120 of 1981 on Palestine in Israel's acquisition of a large part of the territories reserved for the Arab peoples and an even greater injustice was committed in Israel's occupation of all Palestinian territory following the 1967 war.

"In spite of all these manifestations of injustice, the Palestinian people, as a result of their sacrifices and their triumphant spirit of innovation in their struggle, have emerged victorious in the new political situation and have proven that they deserve their freedom within an independent national entity. That entity is now a full-fledged partner in the current peace process, supported by all friendly brotherly countries and all peace-loving forces.

"The celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People represents a realignment of the international community's objectives and in the way it has addressed the question of Palestine, which has long been discussed as a question of refugees to whom assistance was to be provided wherever they might be. Despite its disadvantages, a return to their land is the ideal

framework within which to deal with this problem and to ensure a historical reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis.

"Before the Madrid Conference was held, the Council of the League of Arab States welcomed international and regional efforts to bring about a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Ever since that Conference, just and lasting peace has become a strategic option for the Arabs, affirmed by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), as have the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the principle of "land for peace". The League of Arab States welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles on 13 December 1993 in Washington between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel. Arab peoples and Governments subsequently welcomed the various stages and phases on the road to peace, all in an effort to restore the rights of the peoples of the region and to ensure security, stability and development throughout the region.

"It is our hope that Israel will accelerate all aspects of this process and fulfil its commitments honestly and sincerely, so that the desired peace may reign and the peoples of the region can work for their development and stability. Through their culture, the Arab peoples are peace-loving by definition. Today, they are committed to peace within the framework of one of the most sensitive conflicts in their history: the Arab-Israeli conflict.

"I am convinced that they would be even more inclined to work for peace if they did not feel slighted. How can the Arab peoples work for peace while their brothers in Libya and Iraq are suffering under an embargo and from hunger? We hope that this extraordinary situation — "extraordinary" in the true sense of the word — will come to an end and that all Arab peoples can devote their efforts to the Palestinian people striving to build a better future. The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is inalienable and cannot be negotiated. It has been reaffirmed in the Charter and in resolutions of the United Nations. It has been exercised by peoples whose civilizations are no more vigorous than that of the Palestinian people. Peoples who have long fought for this right are understandably firm in their support today for the struggle of the Palestinian people.

"The ongoing peace process requires the efforts of this Committee and its support for the Palestinian national Authority, which is gradually assuming its responsibilities in Palestinian territory. This Authority, however, is having to cope with harsh and complex economic and social realities following the occupation. The success of the entire peace process depends on that of Palestinian autonomy and on the Palestinian people's achieving their rights and their aim to live in freedom and independence. That is what we expect of this Committee and we hope that the international community will accordingly increase its support for the Palestinian people and address such pending issues as the question of refugees from settlements and Jerusalem.

"In this connection, we call on this Committee to continue to support the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We hope that the Agency will pursue its work to achieve justice and that this Committee will urge Israel to end its settlement policy, which is an obstacle to the peace process. Here, we would urge the United States to put a halt to the settlements and to the activities of settlers who are hampering the peace process, even in Israel proper. The United States has a special responsibility. It can use loan guarantees to compel Israel to renounce this policy.

"As for Jerusalem, its status is dear to the hearts of Christians and Muslims. Jerusalem is also an integral part of Palestinian occupied territory within the context of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). Israeli activities in Jerusalem are in conflict with the spirit of the peace process and at variance with American and Israeli assurances, contained in Shimon Peres's letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, that the status of Jerusalem and the Palestinian institutions will not be altered. In this connection, I am grateful to the American Administration for the stand it has taken on the United States Congress's resolution to transfer the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. That resolution will increase extremism in the area and stands in the way of the peace process. The decision of the American Administration is based on its understanding that the status of Jerusalem will determine the success of the entire process.

"The League of Arab States wishes once again to express its appreciation to this Committee, which is constantly striving to support the efforts of the

Palestinian people in their just struggle. We are convinced that it will continue to work to that end and make it possible for the Palestinian people to recover all their legitimate national rights, in particular the right to self-determination."

The Chairman *(interpretation from French)*: I thank Mr. Said Kamal and request him to be kind enough to convey to the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States the sincere thanks of the Committee for his important message.

I now call on Mr. David Weaver, Director of the Middle East Office of the National Council of Churches and representative of the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine.

Mr. Weaver (International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine): I am honoured to speak today on behalf of my colleagues, Mr. Donald Betz, President of the International Coordinating Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine, and Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine, and on behalf of the movement of non-governmental organizations, which has stood in support of and solidarity with the Palestinian people for nearly five decades. On their behalf also, let me express thanks to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for extending me an invitation to address their meeting on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

In this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, one cannot but note how both the history of the non-governmental-organization movement and the history of the Palestinians are bound up with the United Nations and with each other. In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, from its very foundation the United Nations has been an Organization not only of Governments but also of non-governmental organizations, which have been accorded a special place and the right of access to its deliberations. The founders of the United Nations recognized that the peoples of the nations of the world are not and cannot be represented solely by their Governments and that human society, in the breadth and complexity of its relationships — now fashionably called "civil society" — must be present in that institution which most represents the global community in its entirety. Even more significantly, the preamble of the Charter declares that the Charter itself comes from the "peoples of the United Nations" — I would repeat: "the peoples".

By that declaration, the United Nations recognized the reality and inspired the hope of all those millions whose aspirations for self-determination and freedom were yet and are yet to be fulfilled in independent statehood. It recognized its role as forum and recourse for all those whose emergence as nations were and are resisted and contested, whose voices often went and go unheard in national capitals, and who frequently suffered and still suffer injustice, occupation, repression, colonization, annexation or expulsion.

It has been the tragic fate of the Palestinian people that they have suffered and endured all the aforementioned evils as a consequence of the attempt of this very Organization to answer the horrors of European anti-Semitism and genocide with the affirmation of another people, through the partition of Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel as the State of the Jewish people. The triumph of the one has meant catastrophe for the other, whose bitter consequences have persisted through these many years and which only now may be approaching some measure of redress. The question of Palestine, the welfare of the Palestinians and the recognition and satisfaction of their demands for justice from the international community have been an inescapable responsibility of the United Nations ever since that fateful decision was taken 48 years ago. It has been a unique responsibility, as unique as the decision that brought it into being, and one that has shaped the life of the United Nations ever since.

In one form or another, the non-governmental-organization movement has been part of that long and painful history every step of the way. As ad hoc groups of concerned individuals and as well-established charities, as churches and religious bodies and organizations, non-governmental organizations responded to the Palestinians in those early years with an outpouring of emergency assistance. Later, when it became apparent that the Palestinian diaspora was not a matter of days or weeks or months but of years, longer-term social and economic development projects appeared. From these early responses of compassion for human suffering came the knowledge of the experience of the Palestinians as a people, and from this knowledge emerged genuine solidarity and recognition of Palestinians' rights to self-determination, to independence and to sovereignty, to have a homeland and to return to it. This solidarity has been given explicit institutional form in the network of non-governmental organizations on whose behalf I speak today, which have turned their chartered

relationship with the United Nations into a partnership to affirm and uphold the national rights of the Palestinians in accordance with international law and universal principles of justice and freedom, as articulated repeatedly in United Nations resolutions.

The movement of non-governmental organizations has been a curious -- if not cacophonous -- mixture of principle and pragmatism in its support of the Palestinians, both in it relationship to the United Nations and elsewhere. This is not surprising, since both the term "non-governmental organization" and the movement itself encompass an astonishing array of forms of human organization and points of view. The non-governmental organizations are united by four things: they are not Governments; their members usually are brought together freely by some shared belief or commitment or faith; they are undiplomatically uninhibited in their speech; and they care passionately about the Palestinians and their struggle. Many among them also care about those against whom the Palestinians have struggled, the Israelis, having foreseen long ago that, for good or for ill, the fates of the two peoples are now inseparably bound together and that the only hope for survival for both is mutual recognition, mutual respect and eventual reconciliation on the basis of a just peace -- not a perfect justice, either, but a very imperfect justice, deeply unsatisfying to anyone who has lost and suffered so much, yet one which offers a better future than unremitting strife and violence. That even imperfect justice has its bitter enemies, in all camps, has been demonstrated by the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. His assassination has revealed in its aftermath, however, that the mutual recognition and process of negotiation represented by the Declaration of Principles, however flawed, have become nearly irreversible.

With regard to the present process of the agreements of Oslo, Cairo and other places, the movement of non-governmental organizations is divided, so I can offer no comment on behalf of all. There is cautious support, tacit acceptance and vocal opposition. What stands out clearly to us is the asymmetry of power and the continuing vulnerability of the Palestinians to domination and manipulation. This fact represents an enormous challenge to the Palestinian people and their leadership, to the United Nations and the international community and to the non-governmental organizations that are in solidarity with the Palestinians to ensure that the process whatever paths it may take, does not stop until the Palestinians attain fully their national rights. All bets may be on the future, though the outcome depends not on chance, but on will and effort. Therefore, what can be affirmed is our continuing critical solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people, our recognition and insistence that the United Nations has a unique role as the guarantor of their national rights within the international community and our unshakeable adherence to the fulfilment of those rights.

The Chairman *(interpretation from French)*: I thank Mr. Weaver and ask him to convey the Committee's thanks to the Coordinating Committee for the valuable contributions that non-governmental organizations have always made to the Committee's work.

It is now my honour to announce that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has received messages of support and solidarity from many Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations. The texts of the messages will be published in a special bulletin of the Division for Palestinian Rights, but I should like to read out the list of those who sent them.

We have received messages from the following Heads of State: His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt; His Excellency Mr. Nouhak Phoumsavanh, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic; His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal; His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan, President of the United Arab Emirates; His Majesty King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques; Her excellency Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka; His Excellency Mr. Soeharto, President of the Republic of Indonesia; His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar; His Excellency Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus; the Central People's Committee of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; His Excellency Mr. Le Duc Anh, President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; His Excellency Mr. Liamine Zeroual, President of Algeria; His Excellency Mr. Burhan-ud-dun Rabbani, President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan; His Excellency Mr. Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation; His Excellency Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, President of the Republic of Mali; His Excellency Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine; His Excellency Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia; His Excellency Mr. Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania; His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam; His Excellency Mr. Abdu

Rahman Biswas, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh; His Excellency Mr. Fidel V. Ramos, President of the Republic of the Philippines; His Excellency Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of Colombia (in his capacity as President of the Non-Aligned Movement); His Excellency Mr. Sixto Durán Ballén, President of the Republic of Ecuador; and His Excellency Mr. Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

We have also received messages from the following Heads of Government: His Excellency Dato Seri Mr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia; Her Excellency Mrs. Tansu Çiller, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey; His Excellency the Honourable Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada; His Excellency Mr. Li Peng, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China; His Excellency Mr. Banharn Silpa-Archa, Prime Minister of Thailand; Her Excellency Mrs. Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; His Excellency Mr. Felipe González, Prime Minister of Spain; His Excellency Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister of India; and Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

The Governments of France, Guyana and South Africa have also sent messages.

The following Ministers of Foreign Affairs have sent messages: His Excellency Mr. Guido Di Tella, Minister of Foreign Relations and International Trade and Culture of the Argentine Republic; His Excellency Mr. Karolos Papoulias, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece; His Excellency Mr. Luiz Felipe Lampreia, Minister of External Relations of the Federative Republic of Brazil; His Excellency Mr. Yohei Kono, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan; His Excellency Mr. Rodrigo Pardo García-Peña, Minister for Foreign Relations of Colombia; His Excellency Mr. Farouk Al-Shara, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic; His Excellency Mr. Omar Mustafa Muntasser, Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya; His Excellency Mr. Gong-Ro-Myung, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea; His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman; and His Excellency Mr. Agard Didi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda.

We have also received messages from His Excellency Mr. Hamid Algabid, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and His Excellency Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity.

From specialized agencies, we have received a message from His Excellency Mr. Federico Mayor, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. We have also received a message from Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

We have received messages from the following non-governmental organizations: the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee; the Women's Union of Russia; the Indo-Arab Islamic Association; The Andean Commission of Jurists; Association Belgo-Palestinienne; the International Progress Organization; Centro italiano per la pace in Medio Oriente; the Association of Israeli-Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights; and the Committee of Tunisian Women.

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People as a whole, I should like to express our sincere appreciation to the Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Governments and the organizations I have just listed and to all participants for their constant efforts towards a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and for the support they have always given to the objectives and activities of our Committee.

The statements that we have heard and the messages of solidarity we have received today demonstrate once again the determination of the international community to progress towards the establishment of peace in the Middle East through the attainment of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with United Nations resolutions. I can assure you that we, the members of the Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, will spare no effort for the achievement of those objectives.

I now have the pleasure of calling on Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Mr. Kaddoumi (Palestine Liberation Organization) (*interpretation from Arabic*): First, on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization, I should like to convey through you, Sir, our sincere thanks to all the sovereigns and Heads of State who have sent messages of solidarity to this Committee. I also offer our heartfelt thanks for the

messages of solidarity we have heard this morning from the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council of the United Nations, and from international organizations.

The United Nations commemoration of this Day and this gesture of solidarity reaffirm the Organization's commitment to the search for a just solution to this long-standing problem. The United Nations has always striven to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East region and to defuse the tension that still exists there. From the very outset, under the leadership of the PLO, the Palestinian people has worked to attain that goal and has made many sacrifices and concessions for the cause of peace.

In the future, the Palestinian people will not hesitate to defend the peace process, since we are on the right track. In keeping with the principles of the United States initiative of 1991 and of the Madrid peace Conference, the Palestinian people fervently desire a just and lasting peace. Our people as a whole has suffered for so long and sorely needs peace. We need the United Nations to help resolve this chronic problem.

In conclusion I wish to reiterate our heartfelt thanks for the Committee's contributions and support. Peace be with you.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I wish to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has made this meeting possible, in particular the members of the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Office of Conference Services, the Department of Public Information and the security officers and everyone else who works behind the scenes.

I want to remind everyone that the exhibit arranged by the office of the Permanent Observer of Palestine, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, will be opened today at 6 p.m. in the public lobby of the General Assembly building, and that the ceremony will be followed by a reception to which you are all cordially invited.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.